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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 6752
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 9416
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5466
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 5258
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1368
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2598
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 6149
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BANGKOK 000291

SIPDIS

STATE FOR G/TIP MTAYLOR, DRL/IL MJUNK
DOL/ILAB FOR JENNIFER PIORKOWSKI AND BRANDIE SASSER,
H FOR GATZ PLS PASS TO LUSE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/03/2019

TAGS: [ELAB](#) [KTIP](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: STAFFDEL LUSE, THAI OFFICIALS DISCUSS HUMAN
TRAFFICKING, ALLEGATIONS OF UNIDENTIFIED REMAINS IN THAILAND

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Classified By: Pol Counselor George Kent, reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY AND COMMENT

11. (C) Summary: In a December 12 discussion with Professional Staff Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Keith Luse, who was in Thailand to explore alleged trafficking issues, Thai forensic science expert Porntip Rojanasunan claimed that ten thousand unidentified bodies turn up in Thailand each year. Subsequently, Porntip's staff clarified to the embassy that the number of unidentifiable corpses was two orders of magnitude lower. In addition, Dr. Porntip referred to a "killing field" located in the Mae Sot area along the Thai-Burma border, which "no one wants to investigate." Porntip requested USG training for her institute. A Royal Thai Police (RTP) official told Luse he was concerned about Thais trafficked into Malaysia, and he also cited good cooperation with U.S. DHS/ICE personnel. UN officials based in Bangkok claimed USG trafficking in persons (TIP) reports had motivated governments throughout Southeast Asia to make progress on TIP; they also noted difficulties in combating TIP in the Thai-Malaysian border area.

12. (C) Comment: The embassy is deeply skeptical of Porntip's claim that up to 10,000 unidentified bodies appear throughout Thailand each year; statistics of violent deaths/homicides of all categories over the years have traditionally shown only 4000-5000 such deaths nationwide annually, with most victims identified. Embassy finds Porntip's staff's estimate of dozens, rather than thousands, much more credible. Post is following up with local authorities and others to try to confirm the extent of the issue. Regarding the alleged site near Mae Sot, a credible NGO source separately described to embassy an alleged disposal area 20 minutes from Mae Sot where he claims to have found traces of up to 40 charred remains in 2005. The victims were allegedly migrant workers killed after they allegedly failed to pay alien smugglers, refused to pay police protection fees, or caused trouble

inside factories. End Summary and Comment.

Expert Concerned about Unidentified Remains

13. (C) Director General of the Central Institute of Forensic Science at the Ministry of Justice Porntip Rojanasunan met with visiting SFRC Staff Member Keith Luse, accompanied by Poloff, on December 12. Porntip remarked on the overwhelming number of unidentified remains reported to her institute on a yearly basis. According to Porntip, over the past 10 years, an average of 10,000 sets of unidentified human remains were discovered per year. She claimed to have found 1,000 unidentified bodies in Pattani province alone this year, but said she did not receive a request from the National Human Rights Commission or other government offices, such as the police, to investigate the cases. Porntip suspected that the bodies found in Pattani were mainly Cambodians, and a few Burmese, noting that Muslim men were easily identifiable by their circumcision. Unidentified Muslims bodies, she said, tend to be separated from other unidentified bodies and buried immediately in cemeteries. However, she was distressed because the non-Muslim corpses are often cremated by Chinese Buddhist foundations in an act of good faith by the foundation.

14. (C) Note: Porntip's high figures clashed with those of a lower-level official from the Central Institute of Forensic Science who told us subsequently on January 8 that the Institute received 200 initially unidentified bodies in 2008. Since they had identified 116 bodies, the Institute considered the official number for 2008 to be 84 unidentified bodies.

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15. (C) Porntip told us that her Central Institute of Forensic Science hoped to start a program in southern Thailand to provide Chinese Buddhist foundations that deal with unidentified remains with refrigeration equipment and cameras to record and preserve the bodies. Porntip asked Luse for U.S. government assistance in providing or supporting training programs featuring international forensic anthropologists. Porntip hoped to provide experts at her Institute with further training on identifying the nationality of 750 remains through DNA and other methods. Porntip was heading a forensics training program for military officers, teaching them how they can use forensic science to further their intelligence gathering. She told us that drug dealers often fund insurgents through the illegal narcotics trade, and she warned that smugglers often trafficked explosives at the same time as people.

16. (C) Porntip told Luse that she had recently worked on a case involving unidentified Burmese remains in Phuket province. According to Porntip, the unidentified Burmese were most likely migrant workers. However, the morgue classified the remains in the same category as the remains of deceased criminals and had cremated the bodies before she could review them further. According to Porntip, the bodies were cremated to avoid opening a police investigation into the matter. Porntip expressed frustration at police reluctance to start criminal investigations into unidentified remains.

17. (C) Separately, Porntip spoke of a "killing field" in Mae Sot, along the Thai-Burma border where several unidentified, burned remains were discovered. Porntip believed bodies were taken to the location, and burned on large tires. However, she had not received Ministry of Justice permission to open an investigation into the bodies or site. (see para 2 comment for an independent view on the Mae Sot site.)

Police Cite Need for Evidence to Launch Investigations

¶8. (C) Luse also met separately with Police Colonel Suwichpol Imjairach and Police Colonel Lieutenant Yannapong Setpayapan of the Children, Juveniles, and Women Division (CWD) of the RTP at their main office. Suwichpol relayed RTP concerns of Thai workers being exploited and abused in Malaysia, and said that CWD focused its efforts on the prevention and investigation of trafficking crimes and protection of trafficking victims in Pattaya, Chiang Mai, and Phuket. Suwichpol thanked Luse for understanding the complexities of law enforcement in the volatile southern region, noting the dangers of police work in the midst of insurgent activity.

¶9. (C) According to Suwichpol, CWD always contacted U.S. DHS/ICE representatives when an American citizen was involved in a trafficking case, such as the December 11 raid in Pattaya that resulted in the arrests of four pedophiles, including one Amcit. Suwichpol promised to continue to investigate suspected traffickers using an anti-money laundering law that facilitates the issuance of arrest warrants, but added that the CWD must operate in the confines of evidence as required by law. He said that he would try to secure future evidence from interviews with trafficking victims, and stressed that he could not start police investigations without having identified trafficked victims.

UNIAP to Begin Work with Malaysian Government Against TIP

¶10. (C) Representatives from the UN Inter-Agency Project (UNIAP) on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region, meeting with Luse, praised the impact of the

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annual State Department TIP report. UNIAP Regional Project Manager Matthew Friedman commented that the report caused competition between ASEAN countries in ratcheting up anti-TIP programs. Friedman added that UNIAP was trying to work with the Department of Special Investigations (DSI), but noted the risks of surveillance in TIP hot spots in southern Thailand due to insurgent activity. UNIAP aimed to quietly assist the Malaysian government, hoping to encourage GOM efforts to further combat TIP. (Comment: In November, Embassy Kuala Lumpur briefed UNIAP on anti-trafficking in Malaysia, provided UNIAP with contact information for government and civil society, and urged the project to begin activities in Malaysia. End Comment.)

¶11. (U) This cable has been cleared by Staffdel Luse, and coordinated with Embassy Kuala Lumpur.
JOHN